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Socialist Studies No 87, Spring 2013

The Necessity of Socialism

In the COMMUNIST MANIFESTO, published in 1848, Marx and Engels advocated revolutionary change in society to address the severe social problems facing the working class. Capitalism was “*a fetter on production*” reflected in periodic economic crises and trade depressions in which “*previously created productive forces, are periodically destroyed*”.

The objective of the MANIFESTO was for the working class to organise consciously and politically within a Socialist Party to replace capitalism with Socialism. Socialism, a distinct social system in its own right, was to be established in order for the forces of production (including social labour) to be released from the anti-social impediment imposed upon the means of production and distribution by capitalist class relations. Instead, production and distribution would take place just to meet human need not the pursuit of profit. And human creativity, denied a universal expression by the existence of wage labour and the labour market, would be a central feature of work within an association of free men and women.

However, from 1917 onwards, the necessity for Socialism as a practical alternative to capitalism was confused with the establishment of large scale nationalisation or state capitalism, over most of the world; first in Russia, then in Eastern Europe, China, Vietnam, and Cuba. Matters were made worse in 1991 with the collapse of the Soviet Union when its erroneous association with Socialism/Communism temporarily overshadowed the sound and valid case for the common ownership and democratic control of the means of production and distribution by all of society. Socialism was no longer seen as a necessity but something to be avoided and the writings of Marx became very unfashionable.

The failure of Russian state capitalism and the introduction of market reforms in China during the 1980's gave way to a dogmatic, albeit false, belief that there was no alternative to the market, to buying and selling, wage labour and the profit motive. Capitalism, we were told, was efficient and innovative; the best of all possible worlds. “*Trickle-down*” economics would ensure that all would enjoy and benefit from the social wealth created by the magic of the free market.

By the mid-1990's, market fundamentalists projected a vision of a capitalist utopia based on free markets and free trade with the prospect of minimum governments and no State interference in commodity production and exchange for profit. Globalisation was the universal panacea for any social problem that existed in the world; whether it was poverty, war, starvation, illiteracy and poor health. Consequently the media began to disseminate the message that there was no need to consider an alternative social system to capitalism; there was no necessity to replace the wages system with Socialism. Capitalism was to last forever.

The prospect of a capitalist future; a crisis free economy and sustained economic growth was broadly accepted by the government leaders of the world, economists, non-government organisations, the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organisation and the World Bank and other political institutions. Any dissent to this utopian vision was written off as idealistic, impractical, and even dangerous. According to Gordon Brown there was to be “*no more boom and bust*”. That was until 2008. How fast “*all fixed, fast frozen*” ideas began to melt away. A utopian crisis free capitalism of sustained economic growth was just that; utopian. Capitalism can never meet the needs of all society. Capitalism and never be stable and free from contradictions.

In an article “*A Lost decade looms and there is no escape*” (TIMES 27 August 2012), Bruce Short, manager of Murray International Trust, lamented at the impotence of economists and economic policy makers to end the trade depression. He wrote:

“Policy makers had resolved to lower interest rates and money printing but that would not drag the developed world out of a down-turn that could easily last another decade...There are no policy options – no fiscal policy or monetary policy options. The chances of orthodox policy giving any relief are extremely low. They can’t do anything”.

So it is back to the future. The necessity for the establishment of Socialism first put forward in the COMMUNIST MANIFESTO, although it never went away in the first place. And for five very good reasons:

- * The natural environment cannot sustain the capitalist global growth model based on current Western European and US consumer patterns (see *Ecological Footprint*, Wikipedia). Already, there are the entrenched social and environmental problems generated by global warming, pollution, waste and deforestation; all negative by-products of commodity production and exchange for profit.
- * International rivalry over, trade routes, areas of strategic influence, raw resources like oil, gas and water, is causing continual conflict and war. Global instability gives a lie to the free-market doctrine of the “*minimal state*”. Governments are becoming more intrusive, coercive and violent not less. Weapon production is increasing not falling. More and more resources are being invested by governments in internal security and tactics to prevent riots and civil disorder, particularly unemployment, food riots and protests against austerity measures. While capitalism lasts the State will always remain “*The executive of the bourgeoisie*”.
- * The class struggle fought over the intensity and extent of exploitation is still causing class conflict, strikes, a violent State response to protests, increasing dissent, a rise in the questioning of capitalism and the potential for the formation of Socialist working class majority necessary to establish Socialism.
- * Economists and politicians cannot prevent periodic trade depressions from taking place and causing high levels of unemployment, distress and uncertainty; there are now over 19 million workers unemployed in the Euro zone alone some 11.7 per cent of the workforce (EUROSTAT 2013). World-wide, 197 million workers are unemployed out of a global workforce of 2.8 billion workers (ILO UN 2013). The current economic depression is one of many in capitalism’s destructive history and it will not be the last.
- * The abject poverty, hunger, poor sanitation and housing most of the world’s population endures – about 25,000 people die every day of hunger (UN 2012)

The deliberate underuse of the forces of production to produce and distribute goods and services caused by the restrictive limits imposed by markets and profitability undermines the utopian belief that capitalism can ever be considered a social system capable of resolving social problems. In fact, the social problems of war, environmental damage, the class struggle, hunger and unemployment are caused by capitalism in the first place.

The revolutionary insight given by Marx and Engels of capitalism as an anti-social barrier preventing the needs of all society from being met adequately and comprehensibly continues to hold true today. Capitalism cannot produce to satisfy human needs because its motive is profit-making restricting production to what people can pay for. What people can pay for and what they want are two different things with the profit system, as Marx showed, acting as a “*fetter*” on production and a barrier to a society of abundance. And capitalism also causes problems associated with the trade cycle. There is a desperate need for shelter across the world, but raw resources are not being mined,

building materials are being stock-piled because they cannot be sold, machines are lying idle because they are unprofitable to be used, construction workers are unemployed because capitalists cannot profitably employ them. The conscious and political action of a Socialist majority is still an urgent necessity. More so, given capitalism's violent historical track record throughout the Twentieth century and the first two decades of the current one in causing death, destruction and misery to millions of people in two World Wars and hundreds of minor conflicts including recent wars in Iraq Afghanistan, Libya and Mali. The alternative facing the world's working class is a stark one; either Socialism or barbarism.

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An Alphabet of Religious Ignorance

Socialists do not criticise any one religion in particular. We are very egalitarian. We criticise all religions as having no basis in scientific fact and whose origins derived from a primitive explanation of natural events early human societies could find no other explanation for. Later religion became to be used as a means of social and political control both in nomadic tribes and urban settlements.

Unlike other political parties, the Socialist Party of Great Britain is not prepared to compromise its position and embrace superstition, faith and ignorance. Socialists do not canvas the religious vote at elections or embrace radical Islam like the capitalist Left, notably Respect and the SWP or court the support of Christian fundamentalists like the Republican Party does in the US.

Religion: A Useful Fiction

Religion is a fiction but a useful fiction for keeping millions of workers throughout the world tied to spiritual leaders who then tell them what to read, how to act and what to think. An important Socialist principle is that workers do not need leaders, either political or spiritual. The SPGB, having no leadership, is unique in not allowing someone holding religious beliefs to join the Party.

And the actions motivated by superstition, faith and ignorance have been at play in the recent demonstrations and riots allegedly against a film portraying the Prophet Mohammed as an adulterous psychopath and fraud. Those leading the groups who recently attacked the US Embassies in Yemen, and Egypt and the Islamic terrorists who murdered the US Ambassador and three other diplomats in Libya were merely carrying out the orders of professional politicians manipulating events somewhere safe and secure in the Middle East.

The political and religious leaders have an agenda against Western capitalism, particularly the US with its support for Israel, an agenda which those they manipulate and organise into rioting and killing just do not share. The class system and the division of the country into rich and poor exist in Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Egypt just as it does in any other capitalist country. Egypt and Iran have high levels of unemployment, poverty and social alienation while Saudi Arabia is a feudal theocratic dictatorship.

Few, if any of the demonstrators had ever seen the US-made film "THE INNOCENCE OF MUSLIMS" just as only a few Salmon Rushdie devotees had ever read the SATANIC VERSES before a copy of the book was unceremoniously burnt by a mob in Bradford on 14th January 1989. The riots were not spontaneous but organised. The ruling class in Middle Eastern countries has long learnt the political value of religion and has used it ruthlessly to pursue its own interests.

From a class position, workers in the Middle East have identical interests with workers in Europe, the US and Israel. What unites all workers is their exclusion from the means of production by a capitalist class and their resultant class exploitation in being forced to produce more social wealth than they receive in wages and salaries. Whereas religion and nationalism divides and pits worker against worker, the struggle for Socialism should unite the working class with a common aim and purpose; the establishment of common ownership and democratic control of the means of

production and distribution by all society.

The Socialist challenge to Religion

Socialists are not naïve. In many countries of the world religion is the main conduit through which vested political interests take place and are played out. A similar situation took place in 17th century England during the Civil War where politics and class interests were fought out through religion; the Divine Right of Kings defended by the Royalists, appropriation and interpretation of the Bible by religious sects, the God-given commons of the Diggers, the theological liberty of the Levellers and so on.

As Marx said of religion; one religious group holds that only their religion and their religion alone emanates from God while all the other religions are man-made. In fact all religions are man-made; and we use “*man*” with no care for “*political correctness*” for few if any religions have been established by women who usually end up being repressed by them.

The challenge to religion and religious texts began in the 18th century when a non-religious position could be held without fear of imprisonment, torture and execution. And this has increasingly caused defenders of religion a problem. Free and critical enquiry into “*sacred texts*” like the Old and New Testament and the Quran has shown them to be inconsistent fables with no supernatural foundation. Instead of mounting a rational defense of their belief system, theologians have increasingly resorted to *ad hominem* attacks against the person.

So the Chief Rabbi, Jonathan Sacks, accuses Richard Dawkins of anti-Semitism for criticising the Hebrew God of the Old Testament while the historian Tom Holland is accused of “*Islamophobia*” for calling into question the historical origins of Islam and CHANNEL 4 is forced to cancel a private screening of the film, ISLAM: THE UNTOLD TRUTH after receiving “*specific and credible*” threats.

Instead of mounting a defense against the baseless attack on Richard Dawkins, the INDEPENDENT, bastion of “*Liberal values*”, passed over the Rabbi’s comment in silence while the newspaper dispatched journalists to carry out a particular nasty hatchet job on Tom Holland without once criticising those groups whose threats stopped the showing of the CHANNEL 4 film. A new generation of “*useful idiots*” appears to make the same mistake as a generation of liberals and Left-wingers did in the 1930’s when their hatred of US capitalism made them willing apologists for the atrocities carried out by Stalin and his followers.

Darwinianism has kicked the foundations away from under all religions. There is no teleological (first cause) explanation for human existence. No wonder that the Christian and Islamic fundamentalists so despise and fear Darwin’s theory of evolution and want creationism to be taught to school children in its place. Untenable ideas always want special pleading; or to enjoy the special protection of the State, to cry for intellectual ring-fencing and the imposition of no-go areas to their own faith.

There is, however, no God in the “*God particle*”. The underlying reality of the universe is natural not supernatural. As the scientist and mathematician Pierre-Simon Laplace once remarked to Napoleon who asked him where God was in his science: “*I had no need for that hypothesis*”. There is more in Laplace’s partial differential equations than anything to be found in religion.

A Socialist Critique of Religion.

Socialists do not accept self-censorship and if our Socialist criticism of religion offends then so be it. In politics where different class interests conflict there is always going to be a battle of ideas. And the best way to win that battle is for ideas to be analysed, criticised, accepted or rejected through open debate and discussion.

Nothing should be off limits and that includes the critique of religion no matter how hard and painful it happens to be those who hold religious beliefs. Religion is not a private affair. Religion is a social construction and a social institution which turns attention away from the world’s working class consciously and politically solving social

problems here on Earth and instead to look to peace and tranquility in some “*after-life*”.

The establishment of Socialism is the only course of action to resolve the social problems facing workers no matter where they live. This does not exclude the possibility that some religious practice might exist in Socialism just as there might be those who will still believe the Earth is flat. Nevertheless the overwhelming majority of people in Socialism will not be burdened with religious ideas. They will be enjoying fulfilled and creative lives in a social system in which exploitation, poverty and ignorance will not exist.

SOCIALISM AND RELIGION

We have been asked to explain why we do not accept into membership someone who holds religious views. Our reason is as follows. Unlike other political organisations the Socialist Party of Great Britain does not accept that religion is a private matter having no bearing on society at large. We do not allow someone who holds religious ideas to join our Party as members even if they happen to agree with our critique of capitalism and the necessity for the working class to establish Socialism. To hold religious beliefs is incompatible in an organisation which accepts Marx’s materialist conception of history which states that social systems are replaced by other social systems through class struggle and that in this process religious ideas are political ideas; whether reactionary or reformist.

A core principle of the SPGB is that there is no scientific basis for any belief in the supernatural. Religion does not add anything to humanity and historically has been a negative force justifying the privileges of a ruling class, acts of plunder and the portrayal of men and women as flawed, sinful and corrupted by the sensual world. In fact men and women are born into a material and natural world, their ideas are formed by it and they have the capacity to reflect on the natural and social existence that confronts them and change it in a material and social way. The belief that there is anything outside the natural world is a conceit and an arrogance which places fiction over fact; ignorance over science and an empty spirituality over the real sensual world in which we live as human beings. Religion is a negation of being human and has no place in a Socialist political organisation.

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Socialist Ideas and Understanding

For some unexplained reason we are constantly being told that capitalism is so different from previous societies that it is not subject to the law of social evolution which governed the development and decay of previous societies. The point is, can capitalism make history stand still and do its bidding? Can the profit system, in effect, ensure that it will continue to exist simply by the power of private property ownership and accumulation of capital which most people worship but very few enjoy? Presumably, if capitalism can make its own historical rules there can be no prospect of its abolition.

Looking at the evidence around us, the working class shows no sign of challenging capitalism’s rule. There is plenty of social discontent, but this is largely concerned with social reforms or Trade union issues and cannot be regarded as revolutionary activity. What are we left with? First, we have a solidly entrenched social system whose defenders have millions to spend on their lies; second, an apparently disinterested working class who persistently whinge at their predicament but periodically vote into power capitalist political parties; and third, a relatively small but principled revolutionary Socialist Party with limited funds whose monthly visitors to its web site is about 0.0017% of the world’s population. Little wonder we are dismissed as dreamers, utopian preachers and sectarian cranks by our opponents. Yet we persist. An organization which takes on the task of making workers Socialists in the face of tremendous difficulties is considered to be either unrealistic or motivated by spiritual rather than material influences. We are neither.

We do not accept the permanence of capitalism any more than we accept the fact that the workers’ ideas of society

cannot be changed. History shows that social systems change, and that these changes are accomplished by thinking people and that men and women's ideas change with them. This includes ideas on all subjects – religion, politics, morality, science, law and art. Ideas have changed considerably over the centuries and dramatically in the last 100 years. The spread of opinion or social consciousness, as with people's social life generally, develops in accordance with the development of their productive forces. Today, the artificial organs of men and women, their greater control over nature, play a decisive role in their social existence. These artificial organs are not individual but social in character.

If social men and women's intellect, their opinions and culture, are dominated by their circumstances of their economic conditions, at what point can we expect a change in their ideas which will result in a political decision to establish Socialism? The body of opinion today, or the prevailing ideology, is overwhelmingly capitalist, because capitalist ideas are socially sponsored, propagated and broadcast at all levels. Socialist ideas, which arise from the same economic conditions, are ignored or misrepresented as State capitalist or distorted in other ways. Yet the battle of ideas can be fought against such overwhelming odds. In the first instance, we are not merely dealing with people's opinions but with the social factors which give rise to those opinions.

The old French materialists were nearly right when they said opinion governs the world. For example, the political domination by the Catholic Church as in Feudal society is no longer feasible or tolerated, yet the Catholic Church was the political centre of Feudalism for over a thousand years. Further back in some earlier societies it was morally acceptable to have incestuous sexual relationships, group marriages, infanticide and cannibalism. These were the product of well-defined social conditions. The absence of these practices today has nothing to do with moral enlightenment or higher idealistic standards, but to the changed social conditions. Capitalism produces its own sophisticated form of barbaric cruelty and inhumanity on a far greater scale than these seemingly outrageous practices of yesteryear.

Idealists, and this includes proponents of all religion, moralists, humanists and so on, constantly refer to the innate goodness of men and women and what the world ought to be – the world of the true and the just. This conception of the world as it ought to be bears no relation or connection with the world as it is, but also with the historical development which has occurred.

The idealist's conception of history, which claims people's development to be purely intellectual, based on some timeless ethical cause, is the happy hunting ground for the ostensibly reasonable apologists of capitalism – reason will solve everything they claim. Pure reason, like abstract truth, does not exist. Every thought process must be related to social men and women's material needs. This is what society is all about, the organization of a system of production to meet people's material needs.

The question which obviously arises is does capitalism satisfy or can it be made to satisfy men and women's needs? The answer is obviously – no. The contradictions within the system of poverty in the midst of plenty, its dependence on the deliberate scarcity caused by the market economy, its unpredictability and general anarchy, disqualify it as a social system rendering social service in the real sense of the term.

The capitalists' monopoly of propaganda undoubtedly influences the millions of workers who give their support to it generally. But the performance never matches the promise. You cannot indefinitely persuade people that the temperature at the North Pole is 80 degrees Fahrenheit. The greatest ally of the Socialist is the temperature of the economic conditions. We apply our materialism, our factual analysis, continually to the economic background. Socialist propaganda is not aimed at people's "*innate goodness*" or "*social justice*" but at people's material needs. It will be this factor alone which seen as a practical and reasonable alternative to the anarchy of capitalist production will create revolutionary class consciousness and the subsequent political action based on that consciousness.

Opponents of Socialism can be divided into two main groups. One, the dedicated supporters of capitalism and the other, the false friends of Socialism; the Labour Party, The Socialist Party, the SWP and so on, the supporters of reforms and State Capitalism. Of the two groups, the latter are the most pernicious, confusing what Socialism means and offering unattainable social reforms to non-Socialist workers instead of creating class conscious Socialists. The Capitalist Left attack our Socialist case on the false grounds that workers want "*something now*" – not Socialism, which, to the leaders of these organisations, workers do not have the capacity to understand. The Labour Party

believes the preposterous proposition that capitalism can be reformed to be equitable and fair. Socialism, if the word is used at all by the Labour Party is a “*philosophy*” not a social system. For the Socialist Party and the SWP “*Socialism*” is nothing more than State Capitalism. Their politics is anything to get the workers angry; to demonstrate, march and riot. They are obsessed with gesture politics like the recent re-enactment of the 1932 Jarrow March which was ill-attended and an abject failure. They chant out “*the Right to Work*” but no capitalist is obliged to employ the working class particularly in an economic depression. And they oppose “*war*” but everywhere embrace violent rebellions and nationalist struggles by aspiring capitalists in developing countries of the world.

Most of our critics who tell the Socialist Party of Great Britain the workers cannot understand Socialism do not understand it themselves. Socialism cannot be established without working class understanding and this we accept as a core Socialist principle. There is no alternative other than to work to achieve mass Socialist understanding. Workers are not fools. If a proposition is presented to them in a reasonable way they will consider it. At the moment information about Socialism is rare in most working class circles because of the present size and influence of the Socialist Party and Socialists around the world.

There is a vast difference in having a sound and valid scientific case against capitalism and being able to propagate Socialist ideas and for these ideas to be heard. This is the real reason why workers currently do not understand Socialism. The lack of Socialists is purely a technical problem of communication and not, as our critics would claim a flaw in our case.

The responsibility for the extension of Socialist propaganda is the working class at large. The speed in acceptance of Socialist ideas by the working class depends on that. There are no innate principles in people’s existence. Human beings with all their views and feelings, is what nature and society has made them. The establishment of Socialism is a task well within the capacity of the modern working class. The alternative is to watch civilization degenerate and deteriorate under an obsolete social system.

(This article is based from papers of the late Comrade Jim D’Arcy).

A Socialist Reply to Stephen Glover’ article: “We Won the Class War”

(DAILY TELEGRAPH 6th March 1998)

Dear Sir

Stephen Glover is right that Marx underestimated the staying power of capitalism, and that in 1848, he did not foresee (nor did his contemporaries), that the workers would become much better off, as indeed they have done.

However, as Glover states “...*we are most of us still wage-slaves*...” This surely is the main thrust of the MANIFESTO: “The workers have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win. Workers of the world unite!” Does it matter if these chains are of base metal or of gold?

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Socialism or Dead-End Anarchism

A discernible political trend over the last twenty five years has been for the working class to become less and less interested in organised Party politics. This is reflected in the tumbling membership figures of the three main political parties.

In one respect this is good news for Socialists. Workers should not be supporting capitalist political parties. And they should not be giving legitimacy to political leaders like David Cameron, Nick Clegg and Ed Miliband. In fact, workers should steer clear of all leaders, benign or otherwise. Workers should be politically thinking and acting for themselves by becoming Socialists.

With the decline of the Left Wing Party modelled on Lenin's Bolsheviks with its cult of leadership imposing political programmes, policies and orders onto its followers, young workers are increasingly being drawn towards the dead-end politics of anarchism and "*direct action*" with its free-expression for rebellion, dissent and protest.

Direct action, according to the anarchist Rudolf Rocker is:

"...every method of immediate warfare by the workers [or other sections of society] against their economic and political oppressors. Among these the outstanding are: the strike, in all its gradations from the simple wage struggle to the general strike; the boycott; sabotage in all its countless forms; anti-militarist propaganda, and in particularly critical cases . . . armed resistance of the people for the protection of life and liberty." [ANARCHO-SYNDICALISM, p. 78]

Today's anarchists extend this direct action further to include squatting, rent strikes, consumer boycotts, occupations, eco-tage, individual and collective non-payment of taxes, protests against tax-evasion by the rich, blocking roads and holding up construction work and so on. There are even anarchist cyclists who see the car driver as "*the enemy*" and others who want to live as pre-capitalist peasants.

The political trend away from organised Party politics on the Left was symbolically demonstrated in the early 1990's by the now defunct radical book shop Compendium in Camden High Street. Over the decade, before its closure in 2000, the space for books on "*Marx and Marxism*" rapidly contracted while books on anarcho-syndicalism, anarcho-communism, Situationism, eco-anarchism, punk rock, the writings of Proudhon, Rocker Noam Chomsky and Murray Bookchin expanded all over the basement bookshelves. Ironically, given some anarchists *penchant* for violence the former bookshop is now owned by the well-known shoe emporium; Dr Martin's.

The Anarchist Book Fair held annually in London is now considered by the Dave and Deirdre Sparts of the "*libertarian left*" as a trendier venue to be seen at rather than the tired and lacklustre SWP Summer School peopled largely by academic Trotskyists speaking a language no one understands.

And the anarchist AK Press publishing house is the web site of choice for children wanting to buy "*radical*" books and pamphlets to annoy their parents. The various anarchist and nihilist tracts found at this outlet might annoy like a mosquito bite in the Camargue but they possess all the intellectual rigour of a VIZ or a BEANO summer annual.

With the eclipse of the totalitarian politics associated with Lenin and Trotsky, Left Wing politics is fast becoming linked with an anarchism boasting dozens of web sites on the internet and a menu of direct action from anarcho-cycling groups to support for the struggle of the Zapatistas in Mexico. Twenty-first century anarchism; the politics of the child who refuses to grow up; a Peter Pan *agit-prop* made up of inarticulate rage and blind fury. And, of course, anarchism is deeply conservative; it tries to change everything but ends up changing nothing.

Yet, without conscious and political action by a Socialist working class majority organised through a principled Socialist Party, capitalism will remain an exploitive class system with all the social problems the profit motive generates. A Socialist majority must use the vote for the revolutionary purpose of gaining control of the machinery of government.

Without a Socialist majority gaining control of the coercive forces of the State there can be no smooth transformation from commodity production and exchange for profit to common ownership and democratic control of the means of production and distribution by all of society. Workers will not establish Socialism through "*direct action*", barricades, violent general strikes or by confronting the police and armed forces either in Britain or elsewhere in the world.

Socialists do not view Parliament as a fetish. We do not have some banal and romantic attachment to arcane parliamentary procedure. And we have no interest in the office of the Black Rod and other parliamentary rituals. Socialist delegates will enter Parliament with the express mandate from a Socialist majority of ensuring State violence cannot be used to stop the Socialist Revolution. For it is in Parliament that political power – effective political power – resides, not in the corridors of Whitehall, clubs for Officers and Gentlemen in St James or Pall Mall

and the Freemasons Hall in Covent Garden. Socialists are not conspiracy theorists. Socialist delegates will not be impeded from their revolutionary function either by PR consultants, lobbyists and commercial interests. A Socialist delegate can only be bought once. Socialist delegates have no intrinsic political importance except to carry out the will of the Socialist majority who sent them to Parliament. They are not leaders and they will have no role once Socialism has been established. And there has not been a Parliamentary test of the power of delegates acting on instructions given to them by Socialists committed to actively replacing capitalism with Socialism.

A Socialist politics with a democratic political structure based on a set of Principles and a singular Socialist Objective leaves anarchism behind in the child's bedroom with its acne cream, fading Che Guevara poster and dodgy AK Press publications under the bed. Socialism is a politics for the adult. The difference between Socialism and Anarchism is one between changing the world and being changed by it; the difference between moving through revolution from one social system to the next or being led up a political cul-de-sac to nowhere.

Fantasy Capitalism

It is said that after reading the DAILY MAIL you need to have a mental shower to clean your mind from the dirt, bile and hatred that courses through its pages. Increasingly its journalists are pursuing a Mad Hatter politics which sees “*Marxists*” everywhere; at the BBC, in the schools, in the local authorities and in the universities as well as providing the visual narrative for the Olympic Games. How grand and dandy if there really were so many Marxists! One of the DAILY MAIL's leading conspiracy theorists is Stephan Glover. In an article praising the public school system against the subversive “*Marxism*” of the State sector he asserts:

Twenty years or so ago, the class war was widely declared dead. The age-old conflict between labour and capital was said to be over. More and more people thought of themselves as middle-class. It seemed meritocracy had won (November 22nd 2012).

This would have made John Major's government the moment in history when the class war was over. It is pure fantasy. However, class is defined in an objective way with respect to the means of production and distribution. In capitalism there are two classes; the capitalists and the workers: those who own the means of production and those who do not. Workers can dream about not being workers but if they derive an income from wages and salaries or are dependent on someone who has to work for a living then they are members of the working class. Workers are exploited in the production process with capitalists constantly trying to increase the extensivity and extent of exploitation. And it is this resistance to increased exploitation which gives rise to the class struggle. Class conflict and class struggle is only abolished with the replacement of capitalism by Socialism.

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Zombies, Vampires and Things That Go Bump In The Night

Zombie Businesses

The commercial cinema has spawned endless films on the theme of zombies and vampires. Zombies come back from the dead and require several tonnage of human brain matter to survive from one day to the next. A similar problem confronts the vampire whose requirement for blood is equally insatiable.

Over the years the fictional zombie character has seeped into economics. A few years back we were regaled with tales of horror by the economist John Quiggin in his book ZOMBIE ECONOMICS about how dead economic ideas still walk about us although he conveniently forgot to include the dead economic ideas associated with Keynes. Then, about the same time, the late leader of the SWP, Chris Harman, bought out his curate egg of a book ZOMBIE

CAPITALISM in which he failed to include the “*zombie*” politics of Leninism which is now only kept alive by a fast diminishing Trotskyist presence in the universities.

This year there has been another entry into the economic book of horrors; the zombie business.

According to WIKIPEDIA:

Zombie companies are businesses that, although generating cash, are unable to attract enough investment to start paying off their debts. After covering running costs, fixed costs (wages, rates, and rent) they only have enough funds left to pay off the huge interest on their debts, but not the debt itself. This is why they are called "zombie companies" - they are still trading, and so half living, but not able to invest or grow to pay off their debts, which is why they are also considered half dead.

The Banks are currently prepared to accept that struggling businesses are generating just enough money to service their debts and so will not switch off the life support system. This has led to criticism by many economists who believe the commercially weak, the dying and the dead should be swept aside into the nearest economic graveyard to help economic growth – Blockbuster, HMV and Jessops all went in early 2013. “*Creative destruction*” (CAPITALISM, SOCIALISM AND DEMOCRACY, 1942), the Austrian economist J. A. Schumpeter once called it although it is not very “*creative*” for the 10,000 workers who lost their jobs.

The term “*Zombie Businesses*” was first used by the economic journalist Edward Kane. He used the expression to explain the situation of insolvent savings and loan associations in the 1980s and of the parlous state of many Japanese banks in the early 1990s. However, during the financial crisis of February 2009, NEWSWEEK MAGAZINE wanted the government to let all the debt-ridden “*zombie*” banks go under in an echo of the policies pursued by the late Andrew Mellon, President Hoover’s Treasury Secretary.

In the economic depression of the 1930’s Mellon called for “*a liquidation of labour, a liquidation of stocks, a liquidation of the farmers and a liquidation of real estate*” so that all the “*rottenness [would be] purged out of the system*” (quoted in A. Kliman: THE FAILURE OF CAPITALIST PRODUCTION page 23, 2012). Capitalism is not kind; it is ruthless. There is no sentiment; failure to compete successfully means only one ending for those who fail; economic extinction.

If economists are now devoting chapters to their text books with the problems associated with zombie businesses and their negative impact on the current depression and economic growth they are somewhat quiescent on another economic monster; the capitalist as vampire. And for a very good reason.

Vampires and Surplus Value

The metaphor of the vampire to describe the capitalist is found in many of Marx’s writing although its use as a metaphor for the extraction of surplus value first appears in the GRUNDRISSE where capital is described as “*constantly sucking in living labour as its soul, vampire-like*” (p.646), or as “*sucking its living soul out of labour*” (p. 660).

In the “*Inaugural Address of the International Working Men’s Association*” , given while he was in the middle of writing CAPITAL, Marx describes British capitalism as “*vampire like*”, which “*could but live by sucking blood, and children’s blood too*”(THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL AND AFTER, ed. David Fernbach, Penguin, 1974 p. 79)

Marx loved the Gothic and his allusion to Dracula in the foot notes of CAPITAL predates Bram Stoker’s novel of the same name by a couple of decades. However it is probable that Marx picked up the use of the metaphor of the vampire from Engels who had written of “*the vampire property-owning class*” as early as 1845. This is what Engels wrote:

...necessity will force the working-men to abandon the remnants of a belief [religion] which, as they will more and more clearly perceive, serves only to make them weak and resigned to their fate, obedient and faithful to the vampire

The most explicit use of the vampire metaphor is in the first volume of CAPITAL where Marx writes

Capital is dead labour, which, vampire-like, only lives by sucking living labour, and lives the more, the more labour it sucks. The time during which the worker works, is the time during which the capitalist consumes the labour-power he has brought from him (The Working Day, chapter 10, Penguin 1998 p.342).

This passage goes straight to the heart of exploitation under capitalism. Capital is not a thing but a social relationship. And it is an exploitive relationship where the workers produce more social wealth than they receive in wages and salaries. The capitalist has an obsession, spurred on by competition with other capitalists, to suck out surplus value from the working class, to invest and re-invest in

The capitalist is no more than “*capital personified*” whose only function is to ensure the self-expansion of value from one circuit of production to the next. The capitalist can only exist by gorging on the labour power of the working class; the surplus labour that goes on to form the unearned income of rent, interest and profit. Marx wrote:

As the conscious bearer of this (capital) movement, the possessor of money becomes a capitalist. His person, or rather his pocket, is the point from which money starts, and to which it returns... the valorization of value – is his subjective purpose, and it’s only in so far as the appropriation of ever more wealth in the abstract is the sole driving force behind his operations that he functions as a capitalist...as capital personified and endowed with consciousness and a will (CAPITAL VOLUME 1, Chapter 4, *The Transformation of Money into Capital*, Penguin 1998 p 255).

In an amusing paper the academic, Mark Neocleous, refers to Marx’s critique of capitalism as the “*political economy of the dead*” and concludes:

... Marx uses [the vampire metaphor] to illustrate one of the central dynamics of capitalist production — the distinction between living and dead labour, a distinction that picks up on a more general theme in his work: the desire to create a society founded on the living of full and creative lives rather than one founded on the rule of the dead. Writing for readers reared on and steeped in the central motifs of popular literature, Marx thus invoked one of its most powerful metaphors to force upon them a sense of the appalling nature of capital: its affinity with death. The vampire, as a ‘monster’, is of course connected to the root of that term: from monstrare, meaning ‘to show forth’, monstra, meaning to warn or show, monstrum, meaning ‘that which reveals’, or ‘that which warns’, and monere, meaning ‘to warn’. The vampire as monster both demonstrates the capabilities of capital and acts as a warning about it.

<http://ricardo.ecn.wfu.edu/~cottrell/opec/archive/0604/att-0138/01-PoliticalEconOfTheDead.pdf>

In the recent film Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter, the young Abraham Lincoln is told that “*Only the living can kill the dead*”; a very Marxian observation. Although as, one film critic pointed out a far more entertaining film would have had Marx as the protagonist not Lincoln. With club hammer and stake in hand Marx would be seen working his way through the stone and marble crypts of the rich and privileged in Highgate cemetery searching for the un-dead with the film ending with “*integuments*” being burst asunder and “*the knell of capitalist private property*” echoing through the Highgate fog as grave diggers liberated themselves from the chains imprisoning them within the cemetery walls.

Things that go bump in the night.

If there is plenty of blood sucking vampires in CAPITAL what of things that go bump in the night? Well we only have to turn to the first page of the COMMUNIST MANIFESTO to read of: “*A spectre is haunting Europe – the spectre of Communism*”. Communism the “*nursery tale*” once told by politicians to workers to frighten them into conformity and in not thinking for themselves.

The spectre of Communism in 1848 has since 1989 been replaced by the spectre of Marx himself, a convenient

Bogymen to frighten the working class into compliant behaviour. “*Communism*”, “*Socialism*” and “*Marxism*” are all used by politicians as scare words to frighten anyone against thinking of an alternative social system to capitalism. Bloody revolution, genocide, gulags, dictators, coups, purges economic inefficiency; the secret police are all associated by politicians and the media with these three words but no more so than “*Marxism*”.

When has any dissent not been decried as “*Marxist*” by its opponents? The BBC is supposed to be full of Marxists. So are the universities, Local Authorities, the Schools; even in the Church of England. The Catholic Church has its “*Marxist Libertarian Theology*”. President Obama is supposed to be at various times a “*socialist*”, a “*Marxist*” and a “*Communist*”; sometimes a combination of all three. There is a Marxist to be found everywhere; under the bed, in the cupboard, lurking outside in the shadows; never has such a bogey man been so pervasive and so frightening. If, as Engels noted at Marx’s funeral that he “*was the best hated and most calumniated man of his time*”; this hatred and culmination has now continued long after his death and right on through into the 21st century.

Rather than want to exorcise the spectre of Marx, today’s politicians want to deliberately use the fear evoked by the words “*Marxist*” or “*Marxism*” as a warning from history.

The German government, for example, has even left in place one statue of Marx and Engels in the Marx-Engels Forum in the centre of what was East Berlin as a reminder to workers to know their place, not to be influenced by the ideas contained in the COMMUNIST MANIFESTO and not to have anything to do with revolutionary change.

Unfortunately for capitalism’s politicians, Marx as Bogeyman has no substance. Much to their horror the real Marx’s is not a monster from fairy tales. Marx’s works are now being read again because his analysis of capitalism and its economic crises and contradictions was far more penetrating than the superficial and apologetic writings of the economists of his own day and by those economists since.

Even the BBC was recently forced to give Marx one hour of air-time to try to explain (badly) his political and economic ideas and why they were not buried under the rubble of the Berlin Wall. Masters of Money (2nd October 2012) hung on Marx ideas like an underconsumption theory of crisis he did not hold. And nor could he be held responsible for the failed policies of the Soviet Union and the Stasi police State in what was East Germany.

And if there is one political idea that resonates down the years from the COMMUNIST MANIFESTO it is this:

“All previous historical movements were movements of minorities, or in the interest of minorities. The proletarian movement is the self-conscious, independent movement of the immense majority, in the interest of the immense majority”.

The “*self-conscious, independent movement of the immense majority, in the interest of the immense majority*” is no “*spectre*” but a real, living movement in human history.

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The Science of Marxism

Market Failure

Neither Marx nor Engels wanted to be referred to as philosophers. Marx claimed he was a “*Man of Science*” and saw CAPITAL as a scientific work tracing out the movements of “*the self-expansion of value*” or “*capital in motion*”.

And it was Engels who drew the important distinction in ANTI-DURING between utopian Socialism and scientific socialism; although the expression “*scientific Socialism*” had already been used in 1873 by Joseph Deitzgen in a book of the same name. With the discovery by Marx of the materialist conception of history and theory of surplus value, Socialism, for Engels, became a science.

Marx, of course, started his career as a philosopher writing his doctoral dissertation (1841) on the difference between the philosophies of nature of the two Greek philosophers, Democritus and Epicurus. In particular, Marx's main interests were the atomism of Epicurus and his critique of teleology (a theory of first causes) and determinism on the one hand and his philosophy of freedom on the other. (WRITINGS OF THE YOUNG MARX ON PHILOSOPHY AND SOCIETY, ed. and tr. by L. D. Easton and K. H. Guddat, Anchor Books, New York, 1967).

Marx referred to the approach he took to his work as his "*method*". In fact, he did not give a name to his method of enquiry into political economy. Marx nowhere used the expressions "*the materialist conception of history*" or "*the Labour theory of value*" to describe his theory of history or analysis of the commodity although the *Preface to A CRITIQUE OF POLITICAL ECONOMY* (1859) was cited by Marx as "*a guiding thread*" to his studies. Marx refers to his book CAPITAL as "*the only scientific method*" to track the movement of capital in history.

And Marx took his scientific work seriously. Writing in the *Preface* to the French edition of the first volume of CAPITAL he stated that:

There is no royal road to science, and only those who do not dread the fatiguing climb of its steep paths have a chance of gaining its luminous summits.

Karl Marx, CAPITAL, VOL. 1: *A Critical Analysis of Capitalist Production*

It was not until 1886, after Marx's death, that Engels wrote of "...*this materialistic dialectic...has been our best working tool and our sharpest weapon...*" (Engels: LUDWIG FEUERBACH. SECTION IV, Selected Works, Moscow 1970, III, p. 362).

Engels also wrote:

I use 'historical materialism' to designate the view of the course of history, which seeks the ultimate causes and the great moving power of all important historic events in the economic development of society, in the changes in the modes of production and exchange, with the consequent division of society into distinct classes and the struggles of these classes (SOCIALISM: UTOPIAN AND SCIENTIFIC)

<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1880/soc-utop/int-mat.htm>

And at Marx's funeral, Engels drew a comparison between Darwin and Marx:

Just as Darwin discovered the law of development of organic nature, so Marx discovered the law of development of human history: the simple fact, hitherto concealed by an overgrowth of ideology, that mankind must first of all eat, drink, have shelter and clothing, before it can pursue politics, science, art, religion, etc.; that therefore the production of the immediate material means of subsistence and consequently the degree of economic development attained by a given people or during a given epoch form the foundation upon which the state institutions, the legal conceptions, art, and even the ideas on religion, of the people concerned have been evolved, and in the light of which they must, therefore, be explained, instead of vice versa, as had hitherto been the case.

<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1883/death/dersoz1.htm>

Marx merged a lot of different ideas together from the works of Plato, Aristotle, Spinoza, Hegel, and the French Enlightenment philosophers like Diderot and D'Alambert and the writings of Ludwig Feuerbach. He also developed ideas from writers on Political Economy such as Adam Smith and David Ricardo, the Ricardian Socialists John Bray, Thomas Hodgskin, William Thompson and John Gray, and those who he and Engels were to refer to as "*Utopian Socialists*" such as Robert Owen and Charles Fourier, although he grounded his method within the real historical world of facts and experience.

Marx's Method

Many commentators have been critical of Marx for not leaving a book entitled "*method*" and unfairly attacked Engels for departing from Marx's scientific framework. But few scientists leave works called "*My Method*" and Engels knew more about Marx's way of thinking than anyone then or since. In fact, Marx was going to write an

account of his method of working but like several of his other projects he never had the time to begin and complete such a work. He wrote

“If there ever be time for such work again, I should very much like to make accessible to the ordinary human intelligence - in two or three printer’s sheets - what is rational in the method which Hegel discovered but at the same time enveloped in mysticism...” (Marx to Engels in SELECTED CORRESPONDENCE, 1844 – 1895, January 14 1858, p. 93).

In a letter to Joseph Dietzgen in 1876, Marx writes of Hegel what he had earlier had written to Engels:

“When I have shaken off the burden of my economic labours, I shall write a dialectic. The correct laws of the dialectic are already included in Hegel, albeit in mystical form. It is necessary to strip it of this form” (Quoted in Sidney Hook: FROM HEGEL TO MARX. Ann Arbor 1962. p. 61).

How did Marx develop his method? As Antonio Labriola pointed out in his 1896 ESSAYS IN THE MATERIALIST CONCEPTION OF HISTORY, the ideas of Marx was part of the process of history and not something that floated above it:

The truth is that the real precursors of the new doctrine were the facts of modern history, which has become so transparent and so explanatory of itself since the accomplishment in England of the great industrial revolution at the end of the eighteenth century, and since the great social upheaval took place in France (ESSAYS IN THE MATERIALIST CONCEPTION OF HISTORY, 1896, Kerr edition quoted in <http://socserv2.socsci.mcmaster.ca/econ/ugcm/3ll3/marx/labriola.html>)

Marx had already observed that:

... philosophers do not grow out of the soil like mushrooms, they are the product of their time and of their people, whose most subtle, precious and invisible sap circulates in philosophical ideas. The same spirit that builds railways by the hands of the workers builds philosophical systems in the brain of the philosophers. Philosophy does not stand outside the world any more than man’s brain is outside of him because it is not in his stomach... (Marx and Engels, ON RELIGION, pp. 30-31)

Marx developed his scientific method in the 1830’s and 1840’s largely as a result of an engagement with Hegel one of the most philosophically dense and impenetrable of writers. The joke has often been told of philosophers who have entered into Hegel’s philosophical system but have never come out the other end again; similar to the fate of someone passing through a black hole.

Hegel, though, wrote under the influence of the French Revolution and it was his theory of history which Marx “turned on its head” setting out a materialist rather than an idealist starting point to human history. Marx describes Hegel’s dialectic as a “mystification” which consists in the fact that:

...for Hegel, the process of thinking... is the creator of the real world, and the real world is only the external appearance of the idea... With him it (the dialectic) is standing on its head. It must be inverted, in order to discover the rational kernel within its mystical shell” (CAPITAL, VOLUME 1, Postface to the Second Edition, Penguin edition 1990 pp. 102-103).

The next development of Marx’s method came from the confrontation first with the writings a group of German intellectuals known as the Young Hegelians. The critique of this group began with THE HOLY FAMILY (1844) and THE GERMAN IDEOLOGY (1845-6). The critique was extended to cover Proudhon in THE POVERTY OF PHILOSOPHY (1846) and re-appeared again in the late 1880’s with the publication of ANTI-DUHRING (1887) written by Engels but with contributory notes by Marx.

One important influence on Marx should not be forgotten and that is the influence of Engels himself. One of the most important writings on political economy read by Marx was Engels’ OUTLINES OF A CRITIQUE OF POLITICAL ECONOMY written in 1844.

Marx's method in CAPITAL began with the analysis of the commodity set within the capitalist mode of production. He then successively abstracted from the various economic categories that constitute the commodity, including labour, to finally display the real concrete reality and interconnectedness of commodity production and exchange for profit as it moves through history as "*capital in motion*".

In the third Volume of CAPITAL, Marx compared the superficial study of capitalism of the "*vulgar economists*" to his own method. He wrote:

Vulgar economy actually does no more than interpret, systematise and defend in doctrinaire fashion the conceptions of the agents of bourgeois production who are entrapped in bourgeois production relations. It should not astonish us, then, that vulgar economy feels particularly at home in the estranged outward appearances of economic relations in which these prima facie absurd and perfect contradictions appear and that these relations seem the more self-evident the more their internal relationships are concealed from it, although they are understandable to the popular mind. But all science would be superfluous if the outward appearance and the essence of things directly coincided (Chapter 38).

<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1894-c3/ch48.htm>

Marx uncovered the reality of capitalism using his labour theory of value, materialist conception of history and political concept of the class struggle. His discovery was the generation of surplus value and he used it to explain the function of the capitalist as "*the personification of value*" and the exploitation of the working class. Unlike the Classical school of economists (Adam Smith and David Ricardo) whose superficial understanding of the labour market led them to believe in the harmony of classes, Marx's theory of surplus value showed why there was class conflict and class struggle. Marx defined class in an objective way with respect to the means of production and distribution. In capitalism he divided society into two classes; the capitalist class who owned the means of production and distribution and a working class who did not but were forced to sell their labour power or ability to work to an employer.

Surplus Value

So, how did Marx show surplus value to be generated in the production process? The simplified answer is as follows. The workers sell their labour power or ability to work to the capitalist in exchange for a wage. The value of the worker's labour power or ability to work is determined just like any other commodity that is, by the socially necessary labour time that goes into its production. For the working class this socially necessary labour time is determined by the bundle of commodities the workers and their family need to produce and reproduce themselves as an exploited class. The capitalist having paid in wages or salaries the exchange value of labour power has gained its use or "*use-value*".

If the working day is taken as eight hours and it takes the workers six hours to reproduce the value of their wages, the workers just cannot stop work but have to carry on for another two hours working free for the employer. The first six hours is "*necessary labour time*" while the two extra hours is "*surplus labour time*". The workers continue to produce commodities which are owned by the capitalists and contain additional or surplus value which is realised when the commodities are sold on the market and divided out as the unearned income of rent, interest and profit.

Marx did not write in a theoretical vacuum. He knew of the class struggle taking place between capitalists and workers notably in France, in the 1830's and in Britain at the same time with the Chartist Movement struggling for the vote. We can read a revolutionary perspective based upon a materialist grounding running right through the COMMUNIST MANIFESTO in which a revolutionary working class movement develops from an incoherent mass at the transition from Feudalism to capitalism to a class that had by the 19th century become politically conscious of itself and capable of establishing both Trade Unions and a Socialist political party. And it is this movement which the science of CAPITAL is written to assist the working class in the revolutionary transformation of capitalism to Socialism.

Nevertheless the germs of Marxism as science lay in the first tentative ideas set out in the COMMUNIST MANIFESTO of 1848. As Labriola noted:

The Manifesto was designed for nothing else than the first guiding thread to a science and a practice which nothing but experience and time could develop. It gives only the scheme and the rhythm of the general march of the proletarian movement (Labriola loc. Cit).

With materialism as his fundamental premise and a dialectical method rooted in science not philosophy, Marx was able to comment on historical events, lay bare “*capital in motion*”, frame a Socialist political programme which focused on the agents of Socialist revolution; the world’s working class.

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Is There a Housing Crisis?

We are told by the media and by housing pressure groups such as Shelter that there is a “*Housing crisis*” which demands immediate government attention. Social reformers erroneously believe that the right government policy on housing provision will eradicate the problem of poor housing and homelessness. They are wrong. Governments cannot solve the problem of insufficient or defective housing for the working class any more than they can solve other entrenched social problems like war, periodic economic crises and high levels of unemployment.

And in any event, the “*Housing crisis*” is not new. The statute book is full of housing reforms enacted to solve the “*housing crisis*”; late 19th century legislation for slum clearance and Municipal Housing, the Liberal government’s 1919 Housing and Town Planning Act on Rent restrictions followed by the Labour Government’s 1965 Rent Act (both an unmitigated failure), the 1961 Parker- Morris minimum space standards which were repealed by the Thatcher government twenty five years later because they were too expensive; the post-1945 Council House building boom which has seen many of these estates raised to the ground because they were badly built or unliveable , The New Town Acts, Building Regulations so complex that it has created a micro-industry of consultants to comply with; numerous planning acts, government white and green papers, political initiatives, council housing Acts and so on right up to the present day. There is so much regulation that it often takes longer to obtain all the necessary consents for a proposed housing development than it does to build it.

The cause of inadequate working class housing, either in the public or private sector and the inability of workers to get the housing they need derives from the fact that the capitalist class owns the means of production and distribution including land. The capitalists do not produce housing to meet human need but only construct housing for the purpose of profit. For the wealthy buying a house is not a problem; they get their luxury houses designed by celebrity architects due to the vast disposable but unearned income they possess. There is no housing problem for the rich. They can afford the best money can buy.

However, there is another contradictory feature about capitalism and that is the speculative nature of housing. Developers are quite content not to build houses at all but to speculate on the current value of their housing portfolios. They will also leave property empty. So it comes as no surprise at all to learn that property developers have a portfolio of 3 million units of housing with planning permission despite a severe housing need throughout the country (DAILY TELEGRAPH 14th September 2011). Property speculators sell housing projects with planning permission on to other developers for profit or wait for the price of housing to increase before building. Meeting the immediate needs of people is not what house builders are in business for.

Part of the problem of the “*housing crisis*” is the social reformers themselves. They believe capitalism can be reformed to provide decent housing for everyone. But Capitalism does not behave in this way. The problem is not lack of government will to solve the housing crisis but the fact that the means of production and distribution are owned by the capitalist class. And by ignoring this important fact social reformers, like Shelter block-out the only real conclusion which can be drawn and that is to replace capitalism with Socialism. Only Socialism can provide the necessary social framework in which well-built, socially and environmentally sound housing can be constructed to

meet people's needs.

The only usefulness of Shelter and similar social reformers is to produce statistics which highlight the various problems faced by the working class. What charities can never do is offer a solution to these problems. In times of economic crisis and depression when governments are forced to cut back on spending, the housing reforms are either dropped from consideration, found unaffordable or quietly forgotten about. Shelter's whinging and whining about government inactivity in relation to housing reflects the futility of reformism; a complete ignorance of capitalism, the priorities of capitalism and the reality of the wages system which means that for the wages workers receive means that housing is too expensive a commodity for them to buy outright. Here is a few of Shelter's facts and figures:

- * More than two million people find their rent or mortgage a constant struggle or are falling behind with payments.
- * Against a background of mounting debt across the country, huge numbers of homeowners are having their homes repossessed, because they are no longer able to keep up with their mortgage repayments.
- * Families renting privately on low incomes have to put up with poor living conditions and little security.
- * The number of new households is increasing faster than the number of house builds.

And Shelter also gives the housing crisis in numbers

- * 1.4 million children in England live in bad housing.
- * In 2008/09, 654,000 households in England were overcrowded.
- * The UK is now more polarized by housing wealth than at any time since the 19th century.
- * In 2009/10, more than 62,000 households were found to be homeless by local authorities.
- * At the end of September 2010, 49,000 households were living in temporary accommodation arranged by local authorities. Just over 38,000 of these households had dependent children.

http://england.shelter.org.uk/campaigns/why_we_campaign/the_housing_crisis

The housing problem highlights the on-going failure of the capitalist political parties and their use of social reforms to resolve the housing crisis. Despite the last Labour government promising to end housing shortages and poor housing accommodation both still persist. Governments cannot resolve the housing problem anymore than it can end poverty. Only the establishment of Socialism can provide adequate housing through the framework of the common ownership and democratic control to the means of production and distribution by all of society. In Socialism housing will be built to meet the needs of all those who require housing; whether the need is as young adults, middle aged or elderly. No artificial market barrier will exist to prevent these diverse needs being met.

Of course, at the moment the capitalist class get the best housing. The homes of the rich and wealthy are constantly highlighted on property web sites and television programmes. The most expensive flat in the world, at £6,000 per sq/foot sits atop the 82 other apartments at the famous Number One Hyde Park address. Apparently guarded by the ex-SAS security, with special features such as panic rooms, bulletproof windows, iris scanners and even a secret tunnel to the nearby Mandarin Hotel, the apartment is the biggest of all the luxury flats in the One Hyde Park. The building boasts communal spas, squash courts and even wine tasting rooms while this apartment has 24-hour room service despite the floor to ceiling refrigerators; a snip at \$200 million. Workers will of course provide the security, clean the rooms, wash the laundry, open the front door, park the car, pour the wine, cook the food, make the bed, pull the blinds, maintain the building and so on but what they will not be able to do on their wages is afford to live there.

If the housing policy of the Labour Party has been such an unmitigated disaster what of the Tories housing reforms? The Conservative Party has long offered the working class the illusion that they can begin at the foot of the property ladder and ascend to One Hyde Park. Aspirational politics they call it. It is just fantasy capitalism. Most young workers cannot afford the deposit for a mortgage and those that can have to be helped out by relatives. Many other

young families are forced to live with parents in cramped conditions or have to pool resources to rent in the private sector.

The Conservative “*property owning democracy*” of the 1930’s and “Right to Buy” programme of the 1980’s were designed to take working class votes away from the Labour Party in the ideological belief that workers living in mortgaged houses were less likely to take part in strikes and industrial action than those living in local authority rented accommodation. No evidence exists to show that this is the case. The class struggle takes place in capitalism no matter what housing workers are forced to live in. Workers do not cease to be workers with all the problems wage slavery implies just because they happen to move from the public to private sector.

Of course the Labour Party thought it would get votes from the working class with its Municipal Housing programmes which it pursued as a policy after the Second World War. However, the Labour Party’s Council Housing reforms had nothing to do with Socialism; it was not “Socialist” housing and like the Rent Acts enacted by successive Labour governments, mass council housing was a failure in both provision, standards of design and construction, and maintenance.

Take as an example Park Hill Estate in Sheffield. As factories and workshops attracted industrial workers to Sheffield in the 19th century, row upon row of ‘*back-to-back*’ housing were constructed, deteriorating into slum dwellings by the 1920s. The solution adopted by the Labour controlled council was to demolish the slums and move people to Park Hill, a ‘*streets in the sky*’, high-density concrete clad housing estate, originally built to great international acclaim in the 1960s. With successive Councils unable adequately to afford maintain the estate it suffered dilapidation and decline during the 1980s. With residents decanted elsewhere, the empty flats were then sold by the Council to a developer where they have now been restored and largely populated with so-called “*professional*” workers at prices nowhere near the means of those originally housed there. Ironically the housing estate is now Grade II listed.

Engels wrote about the Housing question in the late 19th century. His remarks then are as valid today as when he first wrote them:

As long as the capitalist mode of production continues to exist, it is folly to hope for an isolated solution of the housing question or of any other social question affecting the fate of the workers. The solution lies in the abolition of the capitalist mode of production and the appropriation of all the means of life and labour by the working class itself (THE HOUSING QUESTION 1872)
<http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1872/housing-question/index.htm>

As Engels’s pointed out over 140 years ago, there is in fact no “Housing crisis”. There is no reason why good houses in sufficient number could be built today to meet the housing needs of all society. The raw resources exist and so do the factories and the building materials. The builders, architects, transport drivers, structural engineers and other involved in the construction of houses also exist; many currently unemployed in the present economic depression.

What then does prevent good houses from being built and people’s housing needs being met? The simple fact is that there is not a market for well-built houses meeting people’s needs since most workers cannot afford such housing. And workers will never have their housing needs met under capitalism because of the restrictions imposed of what they can buy by the wages system. The so-called “*Housing crisis*” is nothing more than the consequence of private ownership the means of production and distribution and the rationing imposed by wages system.

What of Socialist housing? We do not prescribe how future Socialists will live and house themselves and their families. That is for them to decide not us. All we can say is that future housing in a Socialist society will be responsive to the needs of those living in them no matter what their age and the social living arrangement they adopt. And the design and construction of housing will be a creative act, something to enjoy, for both those designing and building them. There have been numerous attempts to provide decent housing but all the attempts have failed because of the society in which we live.

The Swiss architect Le Corbusier once wrote in his influential book, TOWARDS A NEW ARCHITECTURE: “*Architecture or Revolution: Revolution can be avoided*”. If the continued “*housing problem*” demonstrates anything

it is that revolution cannot be avoided and the establishment of Socialism is an urgent necessity if all of society is to get a civilised and creative architecture rather than the, mean, mediocre and utilitarian housing capitalism currently imposes on the working class reflecting the imperatives of the profit system not social need.

MARX AND UNDERCONSUMPTION THEORIES OF CRISES

The “workers can’t buy back” theory was known to Karl Marx and was repudiated by him (see CAPITAL VOL. II, CHAPTER XX, section IV page 476 in the Kerr edition). Marx wrote:

But if one were to attempt to clothe this tautology with the semblance of a profounder justification by saying that the working class receive too small a portion of their own product, and the evil would be remedied by giving them a larger share of it, or raising their wages, we should reply that crises are precisely always preceded by a period in which wages rise generally and the working class actually get a larger share of the annual product intended for consumption. From the point of view of the advocates of “simple” common sense such a period should rather remove a crisis”.

It has continued to be true that each crisis has been preceded by this rise in the share going to the working class; due partly to the fact that in that pre-crisis stage more workers are in work, and partly due to the fact that in a “boom” period the real weekly wages of the workers rise.

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What we said and When

WHAT WE SAID – AND WHEN

THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN

CAMDEN & NORTH WEST LONDON BRANCHES LECTURE SERIES

What We Said

We who are Socialists are all in favour of peace, but at the same time we recognise that so long as men live in societies based upon class opposition, in societies in which the modes of producing the material sustenance are monopolised by a class, so long will war be rife as a means of satisfying national disputes (SOCIALIST STANDARD, January 1905).

The prime purpose of the ruling class in capitalism everywhere is to preserve the private property system. When democracy seems to be the way to preserve it, then democracy is the slogan; but if and when dictatorship seems to be required then they are for dictatorship. It is the fate of the capitalist class that they have to handle an insoluble contradiction. They have a common purpose in preserving the property system and the exploitation of the propertyless working class, but also they have sectional rivalries which make individual capitalists and national groups come into violent conflict with each other. Compete they must, even to the point of “total war”, but they must also see that war does not endanger the capitalist system itself (SOCIALIST STANDARD, January, 1945).

War can solve no working class problems. It cuts across the fundamental identity of interest of the workers of the world, settling sections of the class at enmity with each other in the interests of sections of the capitalist class. It elevates force into the position of arbiter in place of common human desire for mutual peace and happiness (Pamphlet: THE SOCIALIST PARTY AND WAR, June, 1960).

What They Said

We did not conquer India for the benefit of the Indians. I know that it is said at Missionary meetings that we conquered India to raise the level of the Indians. That is cant. We conquered India as the outlet for the goods of Great Britain (Lord Brentford, Tory home secretary, 1924-28, Speech reported in the DAILY NEWS, 17th October, 1925).

Clearly the Government must make up their minds what is their objective in relation to foreign trade. Is it to re-capture our lost market, no matter where they are...or are we to allow Germany, by the employment of questionable devices to prevent this country from re-establishing herself in foreign markets (Emmanuel Shinwell, Labour M.P. HANSARD, June 9th, 1939).

I have heard speeches sometimes that suggested that all international problems could be solved if we could only get a few people sitting round the table and discussing them. Believe me; the thing is not as easy as that. Clement Atlee (Labour Prime Minister, LABOUR PARTY CONFERENCE REPORT, 1945)

It is very difficult to say what the causes of war are. Some say they are economic; some say it is traditional ambition'; some say that some nations get it into their head that the only way they can get prosperous is by domination. Well, to my mind, it is a combination of all three (Ernest Bevin, Labour party Leader and Foreign Secretary, Labour Party Conference Report, 1945).

TOWARDS 2014: THE SOCIALIST CASE AGAINST WAR

The role of the revolutionary Socialist is not to sentimentally moralise against war and the effects of war but to provide a critical examination of why war takes place and in whose class interest wars are fought. There are plenty of organisations, some religious some not, who simply decry war on grounds of religion, justice, peace and other moral abstractions. Ethical denouncement of war is simply utopian and idealistic because it does not accept capitalism as the cause of war and offer a Socialist solution to end all wars; that is, the conscious and political action by the world's working class to replace capitalism with Socialism. Until Socialism is established wars will continue to take place.

Socialist principles are put to the test when they are applied to the real experience of the class struggle. In 1914, the capitalist parties, including the Labour Party, supported the war; Socialists did not. When politicians were either urging workers to enlist or, in some cases, advocating pacifism, like the Liberal Bertrand Russell, the Socialist Party of Great Britain stood alone to condemn the war from the position of the interest of the working class. This is what we wrote:

Whereas the capitalists of Europe have quarrelled over the questions of the control of trade routes and the world markets and are endeavouring to exploit the political divisions and blind passions of the working class of their respective countries in order to induce the said workers to take up arms in what is solely their master's quarrel THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN, having no quarrel with the working class of any country, extends to our fellow workers of all lands the expression of our good will and socialist fraternity, and pledge ourselves to work for the overthrow of capitalism and the triumph of Socialism... Executive Committee August 25th 1914

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Towards a Marxist Critique of Artistic Production

We live in, react to and confront different forms of artistic production which highly values individuality, uniqueness and abstraction. Artistic production is said to be the new secular religion in which art and those producing art are invested with magical almost religious qualities of reverence and awe. Visit any art gallery and it feels sometimes like going into a church. The New Tate in London and the Baltic Exchange in Gateshead, for example, have been stripped of industrial significance to embody the aspirations of a metropolitan bourgeoisie mirrored in the commercialisation of the ground floor *art supermarket*, smart cafes, and the modern art contained within spaces of cathedral like proportions.

Today, most art, music and architecture symbolise a cultural nationalism of prestige, act as a by-product for commercialism, and as a reference point in the art market where authenticity, novelty, critical and institutional validation carry high price levels. For the capitalist wanting to invest and protect their wealth the art market is as important as the stock exchange and other forms of financial investment. The possession of art objects in particular confers on the owner a semblance of power, wealth and privilege. Recently, Channel 4 broadcast a programme, PRIVATE VIEW, in which the billionaire, Ahmet Ertegun, co-founder of Atlantic Records, took the actress Angelica Houston on a guided tour of his paintings and sculptures. What mattered to the programme makers was the projection of the patron's prestige in owning this private art collection. The content of the art on display was irrelevant.

Capitalism has its own Medicis and Borgias each one seeking their own immortality through becoming great patrons of Art. The Mellons, father and son, the Sainsbury family, Charles Saatchi, and the Getty clan, to name but a few have used their wealth to give their name to art galleries, theatres, opera houses and museums as monuments to their power and largesse. They want to gain an eternal legacy through commissioning "*signature*" architects to design in architectural form and space enduring monuments to their lives. It is an arrogant and egotistical conceit. Like the rich buried in sarcophaguses outside churches their names are quickly forgotten and their memories fade away with time. When visiting the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford who remembers the Royalist, Elias Ashmole whose wealth derived from marriages to rich widows and by Royal patronage of Charles II? And who cares?

Of course artists do rebel against the commercialisation of artistic production and their own function in the art market. During the 1960's, auto-destructive art was very fashionable; one artist produced self-destructive machine sculptures, another reproduced his works in ways to make them commercially worthless and another sculpture was destroyed by acid. For the pop group The Who, destruction rather than creativity "*is where it all ends*" with the demolition of their musical equipment at Monterey Pop over the track "*Talking About My Generation*". However, as Tony Hancock showed in his film THE REBEL, most rebellion in art is childish, ineffectual and petulant. Politically, it challenges and changes nothing. So too does nihilism masquerading as art. Rich and aging pop stars do not "*want to die before we get too old*". And Art, even politically motivated art extolling all the political authenticity demanded by fashionable Art critics like Adorno (AESTHETIC THEORY) and Marcuse (THE AESTHETIC DIMENSION), cannot change the world. Art increasingly becomes for intellectuals a refuge from the real world where they are impotently reduced to reverentially talk about plays, books and exhibitions on late night cultural television programmes. The escapism of aesthetic sensibility merely replaces the "*opiate*" of religious sensibility.

And the failure of Art as politics can be seen in the artistic production of the Italian artist Piero Manzoni who died in 1963. He created a limited edition artwork to attack the idea that what he created had a price. Manzoni produced no fewer than ninety 30g cans filled with his own excrement, bearing the label "*merda d'artista*". You might call it crap art, but the Tate Modern defeated Manzoni's rebellious intention in buying-up one of the cans for £22,300. This makes Manzoni's excrement, at £743.33 a gram, more expensive than gold (about £500 a gram when this article was written). True there aren't that many of the original cans left - 45 have since exploded - but it does highlight the absurdity of the art market under capitalism and the failure of artists to successfully rebel against it.

Of course, Manzoni's "*ready-made*" art does have a political point worth considering. Artistic production does not take place in a rarefied atmosphere away from the rest of society. As a consequence, art historians have gradually become, directly or indirectly advisers to art traders. *Art history* has increasingly become an activity whose *raison d'être* is to prepare the ground for auctions and the sale of art as luxury commodities for the rich. The artist has become a well-paid celebrity. The art market has to know, through expert knowledge, whether a painting is by a Rembrandt or by one of his students in order to protect its price.

One art movement which does deserve a positive mention is the group known as Dada whose production of "*anti-Art*" came out of their experience and criticism of the First World War and the society that caused it. Not only did one of the artists, Marcel Duchamp, turn a urinal into a "*work of art*" by signing it "*R. Mutt*" (the original is known affectionately as "*The Fountain*"); they all met at the Cabaret Voltaire in 1916 Zurich where their mixture of Jazz and African music upset the sensibilities of Lenin who was planning his bourgeois revolution in a house nearby.

Even in musical production, how a piece of work locates itself within a specific set of social relationships has

undergone radical transformation over time as social relationships shift, dissolve and re-make themselves within history. Mozart's *Marriage of Figero*, for example, began life as an 18th century opera for the amusement of a bored aristocracy but includes within its musical score a subversive libretto based on sex, class and power which questions Feudal Rights and privileges. Some 250 or so years later the consumption of opera music is now sold for profit through cheap, mass-produced commodities either as CD's or iTunes computer down-loads. As a social form of public display, a Mozart opera is produced now as an expensive luxury commodity to be enjoyed by the ruling class and their politicians at Covent Garden (£54k for corporate membership) and Glyndebourne (equally expensive but the management more reticent to give the cost of their corporate membership) from the vantage point of boxes overlooking a largely working class audience sitting in the seats below.

Some music can be overtly political like the operas of Kurt Weill and Berthold Brecht, notably *The Threepenny Opera*, *The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny* and *The Seven Deadly Sins of the Petit Bourgeoisie* whose first London production at the Savoy in June 1933 had the last four words dropped and the opera renamed *Anne-Anne* in case of offending the sensibilities of the audience. And then there is Arnold Schoenberg's *Ode to Napoleon*, a modern reflection on the question of dictatorship in a musical device known as "speech-song" (it was written in 1942) and uses Byron's contemptuous *Ode to Napoleon Bonaparte* (1814) with its lines of bitter denunciation against the concept of political leadership of which Byron had written:

*Thine only gift hath been the grave
To those that worshipped thee;
Not to thy fall; could mortals guess
Ambitions less than littleness!*

Schoenberg re-used these lines a century or so later to refer to the violent dictatorship of Adolph Hitler's Third Reich and the negative consequence for people who misguidingly follow leaders. Yes, the leader's gift to his followers has, more often than not "*been the grave*".

To continue with the operatic theme, we can look next at the work produced by Gilbert and Sullivan, - dismissed by the arch-liberal boor, Jonathan Millar, as "*UKIP set to music*" - whose musical content had a political and satirical meaning for the 19th century audience attending their concerts. Gilbert, the lyricist, was a High Tory (a paternalistic conservatism linked to the Anglican establishment and backed by the great aristocratic landowners) and used satire in his lyrics to attack political movements, including Socialism, whom he considered a threat to the way of life of the class interests his satirical verse wanted to preserve. In the first performances of *The Mikardo* (1885), for example, the Lord High Executioner initially had on his little list for the chop "*sponging socialists*" - a slur resurrected by the Tory, Peter Lilly, in his 1992 Tory conference speech which included his spiteful reference to "*young ladies who get pregnant just to escape the housing queue*". Later day popular "*villains*" have included "*punk rock anarchists*" and "*bankers and an assortment of politicians - including Peter Lilly*" (there'll none of them be missed).

The weakness and vulnerability of the satirist, from Juvenal, Gilbert to Private Eye, is that they never satirise what they wish to defend - usually a reactionary and mythical past. Today, W. S. Gilbert's librettos have lost much of their political force but the music is still enjoyed by a wider audience, albeit, dictated to by the ruthless and competitive commercial world of the theatre that has changed very little from the time when the operettas were first performed; the profit motive driving the necessity to ensure "*bums on seats*".

Real History versus Fictitious History

In considering artistic production, the principle criticism Marxists make against idealistic interpretations of art history is that the commission, production and consumption of art and music does not exist in a social vacuum and what passes for an art history, the history of philosophy or the history of ideas moving through history as autonomous subjects in their own right are in effect, fictitious histories. Plekhanov argued this position well in a reply to Antonio Labriola's study, *ESSAY N THE MEATERIALIST CONCEPTION OF HISTORY* (1897);

...it becomes clear that men do not make several distinct histories-the history of law, the history of morals, the history of philosophy, etc.-but only one history, the history of their own social relations, which are determined by the

The production, exchange and consumption of art are social relationships and not a discrete set of practices to which the Marxian theory of class, class relations and class struggle either are immune or have no application. However we do not reduce art, philosophy or law to epiphenomenon, a secondary symptom with no causal status. Engels made this clear in a letter he wrote to Franz Mehring;

Connected with this (form is always neglected at first for content) is the fatuous notion of the ideologists that because we deny an independent historical development to the various ideological spheres, which play a part in history, we also deny them any effect upon history. The basis of this is the commonundialectical conception of cause and effect as rigidly opposite poles, the total disregard of interaction...once an historic element has been brought into the world by other, ultimately economic causes, it reacts, and can react on its environment and even on the causes that have given rise to it (July 14th 1893 MARX/ENGELS SELECTED CORRESPONDENCE P.435 Moscow edition).

Just to reinforce this position we cite two more warnings by Engels against turning historical materialism into dogma as though it were a philosophy of history in which everything could be explained by either an economic or technological determinism. In a letter to Joseph Bloch, Engels wrote;

According to the materialist view of history, production and reproduction of real life are, in the last instance, the demanding factor in history. Neither Marx nor I have asserted more than that. If anybody twists this into a claim that the economic factor is the only determining one, he transforms our statement into a meaningless, abstract, absurd phase. The economic situation is the basis, but all the factors of the superstructure-political forms of class struggle and its results, constitutions adopted by the victorious class after winning a battle, forms of law, and, more than that, the reflections of all these real struggles in the minds of the people involved, political, legal, and philosophical theories, religious views both in their early and their more developed, dogmatic form-all these factors also influence the course of historical struggles and in many cases play the dominant role in determining their form.

While, in a letter to Starkenburg he said:

Political, juridical, philosophical, religious, literary, and artistic developments, etc., are based on economic development. But in addition, they all react upon one another and also on the economic base. The economic situation is not an original cause, which alone is active while all else is merely passive effect. There is, rather, mutual action on the basis of economic necessity, which always proves the determining factor in the last instance.

Artistic forms, philosophical ideas and law can and do act back on the way society, social systems and social relations move through history. The key to understanding society is to grasp it as a process of change and not as something static like a house. Metaphors can be “guiding threads” or mental prisons so it is important to remember that ideas located within social relationships and social systems are interactive and capable of change and being changed. Nevertheless as Engels’ noted; ideas do not enjoy an historical independence and movement in history divorced and autonomous from social existence. The motor force of history is, after all, the class struggle no matter how unpalatable it might be to the aesthetic sensibility of the intellectual. And this intellectual error is precisely what is taught to philosophy, law, art and architectural students in today’s universities.

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The Politics of the Economic Crisis

Who benefits from and who can take advantage of an economic crisis and trade depression? Well the various political parties of capitalism believe that the present economic turmoil can be usefully exploited to their own particular advantage.

The Tory/Liberal Coalition say that we all have to have to endure austerity for the conceivable future. Cuts will have to be made to social welfare and the NHS. There has to be less “*red tape*” and a smaller State, both nationally and locally. The Chancellor of the Exchequer, George Osborne and Prime Minister, David Cameron tell us that “*there is no alternative*” to their austerity policies; the cuts and the economic pain. Apparently “*we are all in it together*”; that is, except the capitalist class and those they favour in order to help maintain their dominant position.

Cameron and Osborne see a “*Free Market*” opportunity for a lean and mean private sector and a minimal State. They believe the private sector, freed from government interference and paying lower corporate tax can ensure a crisis free long term economic growth. They blame the barrier to economic growth as a consequence of “*crowding out*” where red tape and bureaucracy prevents the private sector from creating employment and prosperity. This is a myth. The economic conditions the Prime Minister and his Chancellor want to create will guarantee no capitalist utopia of continuous crisis-free growth. In the mid to late 19th century there was a minimal State, free market ideas dominated economic thinking, some trade unions were generally weak until the “*New Unionism*” of the late 1880’s, no NHS existed, there was no “*welfare state*” to talk of, there was very little corporate taxation, red tape was virtually non-existent, the civil service was small and a Tory government was in power. This did not prevent an economic crisis and trade depression taking place in 1875. And it lasted 25 years and it was known as “*The Great Depression*”.

And employers do not exist to employ workers. Yes, capitalists exploit the working class but they are also trying either to increase productivity with fewer workers or to introduce labour-saving machinery. The function of capitalists as “*personified capital*” is to invest in companies to make a profit when trade conditions look good. At the moment many companies are unsure of making a profit, they are not investing and instead sitting atop a mountain of cash worth billions of pounds. Most of the “*jobs*” created in the private sector are part-time work or by workers in their 50’s forced to become “*self-employed*” after being made redundant. These jobs are vulnerable if the economic conditions get worse.

The Labour Party knows that in government its economic policies of cuts and attacking the working class will be little different from the present Tory-Liberal

Democrat coalition but in opposition they follow the Keynesian myth of solving the depression by proposing increased government spending. Why is it a myth? We only have to look at the record of past Labour Governments during economic crises and depressions both in this and the last century. Labour governments have all left office with the unemployment rate higher than when they first came into power. They have done so whether they have followed either Keynesian or non-Keynesian policies. The policies made no difference to the trade cycle and levels of unemployment. Capitalism just went its own way. And capitalism will continue to pass from one economic crisis to economic crisis until the working class consciously organise to abolish the profit system and replace it with Socialism.

Then there is the Capitalist Left. The Capitalist Left looks upon the economic depression as a chance to make political mischief by homing in on working class anger, discontent and fear. They dangle the promise of unattainable social reforms which they tell their supporters can be wrung out of governments and call on workers to “*Fight against the Cuts*”. These political opportunists want to make workers angry as a ruse to lead them towards their own anti-Socialist parties once workers realise that these “*demands*” are unattainable. These political parties are found at “*Right to Work*” demonstrations or parasitically feeding off TUC marches against the government cuts. Like the old Social Democratic parties with their list of palliatives the various Trotskyist groups append an immediate demand programme to their State capitalist objective.

Here is a typical shopping list produced by Socialist Appeal, a Trotskyist political Party, although its “*appeal*” should be resisted by the working class. They urge the working class to support among other things:

*** A national minimum wage of at least two-thirds of the average wage.** £8.00 an hour as a step toward this goal, with no exemptions.

*** Full employment!** No redundancies. The right to a job or decent benefits. For a 32 hour week without loss of pay. No compulsory overtime. For voluntary retirement at 55 with a decent full pension for all.

* **No more sell offs.** Reverse the Tories privatisation scandal. Renationalise all the privatised industries and utilities under democratic workers control and management. No compensation for the fat cats, only those in genuine need .

* **Break with the anarchy of the capitalist free market.** Labour to immediately take over the “commanding heights of the economy.” Nationalise the big monopolies, banks and financial institutions that dominate our lives. Compensation to be paid only on the basis of need. All nationalised enterprises to be run under workers control and management and integrated through a democratic socialist plan of production.
<http://www.socialist.net/socialist-appeal-stands-for.htm>

This is just a fantasy politics setting out either unworkable or unachievable “*immediate demands*”. Minimum wage legislation has never worked in the interest of the working class. Many businesses that get caught paying wages below the minimum just shut up shop. “*Illegal*” immigrants and desperate workers have to accept the low wages given to them by employers rather than being deported or losing their jobs. And why should workers on the current minimum wage of £6.19 be any more grateful to Socialist Appeal if it was increased to £8 an hour? Wage slavery is wage slavery and while workers struggle on the economic front to secure more pay and better working conditions, politically they should not be trying to improve the wages system but instead to abolish it altogether. Socialist Appeal, like other Trotskyist parties are not in the business to abolish the wages system. They are not Socialist organisations.

The Capitalist Left (arrogantly think the proposition of abolishing the wages system is “*too abstract*” for the working class to consider but as we have seen, Socialist Appeal and similar political organisations do not set out to abolish capitalism but only to attempt to replace one ruling class with another; to replace the “*old boss with the new boss*”, which is no change at all. Capitalism can never guarantee full employment as Socialist Appeal knows only too well. In his book CAPITALIST CRISIS: THEORY AND PRACTICE (2012), Mick Brooks, one its leading theoreticians, admits Keynesianism failed in the 1970’s and “*mass unemployment returned*” (p.207). So if the policy failed once before why do his Party advocate it now?

There is no difference between the public and the private sector as far as the working class are concerned. Workers as a class are exploited no matter where they work. When there was nationalisation of the coal mines, steel, railways, dock yards and so on, were the working class any better than before they were nationalised? No. They were still exploited within the wages system producing more social wealth than they received in wages and salaries. Workers had to strike and the class struggle continued unabated.

And what of the Tory anti-trade union legislation? Some of the legislation should not have been necessary to pass in the first place. Trade Union membership should control their unions democratically without leaders and affiliation to the Labour Party and any other capitalist political organisation.

“*Closed shops*” are not effective when workers are coerced into joining the Trade Union and vulnerable if the politics of an individual member is at odds with the political policy of the union leadership. And there are legitimate questions to be asked about why closed shops were welcomed by some employers in the first place, for it was not to further the interests of trade unions. And when voting to go on strike and return from a strike it should be on a majority decision of the membership. Trade Unions and the working class in general must recognise that the industrial class struggle is only a rear-guard action. Workers must see that it is their class interest to consciously and politically abolish capitalism and establish Socialism. And that is through a principled Socialist party.

The task of Socialists has been made more difficult by the association in many workers’ minds of nationalisation with Socialism. Nationalised or State capitalism is, in fact, just another way of operating the profit system which leaves unchanged the exploited and subject position of the working class. State capitalism was an utter failure in meeting the needs of workers post 1917 in Russia in what was called the Soviet Union. The policy of nationalisation was equally a failure in Britain where it was the Labour Party’s “*popular capitalism*” after the Second World War. Workers were still forced to strike. And mass unemployment periodically took place; in the 1960’s 1 million miners lost their job during a Labour government of the time under a ministry led by the darling of the Left, Tony Benn. Nationalisation is not Socialism but State capitalism.

The plague of Trotskyist groups, like Socialist Appeal, generally claim to be Marxist, but they interpret this to mean

the anti-Marxist policy of Lenin based on Louis Blanqui's doctrine of minority armed seizure of power which holds that society can be revolutionised without first gaining control of the machinery of government. These Trotskyist groups also reject the core Marxian principle that workers can understand the case for Socialism in the sense that we use Socialism to mean the common ownership and democratic control of the means of production and distribution by all of society.

Socialist Appeal's understanding of "*Socialism*" is not Socialism at all but the imposition of State capitalism on a non-Socialist working class and the retention of the wages system. And despite their books extolling the writings of Marx, like CAPITALIST CTISIS: THEORY AND PRACTICE (2012), they favour in practice the myth of the Keynesians: that it is all a question of underconsumption and that capitalism can be operated with unemployment through "*managed expansion of demand*". Keynesians see the capitalist economy in a utopian way. Keynesian economists deny or ignore the class nature of capitalism under which commodity production operates by creating profit from the exploitation of the working class. They start from consumption and investment and ignore profitability and the impact that has on investment for the capitalist class. Keynesianism contributes nothing to the understanding of economic crises under capitalism.

Finally there is the Capitalist Right, political parties like UKIP and the BNP. They want to leave the European Union and curtail immigration as "answers" to high levels of unemployment. Yet economic crises and depressions took place throughout the 19th century when there was hardly any immigration to speak of and high level of unemployment occurred in the 1870's and in the 1930's when Britain was not a member of the EU and instead had an Empire which was considered the "*work shop*" of the world. Economic crises and trade depressions cannot be eliminated while capitalism lasts because the profit system is in fact the cause of economic crises.

It was Marx who showed that unemployment, and its rise to peak levels in a trade depression, derive from the contradictions, conflicts and anarchy of commodity production and exchange for profit. No matter what policy politicians and governments follow; free market, fascist, authoritarian, state capitalist, monetarist or Keynesian they cannot abolish the economic laws acting on capitalism and the social consequences these economic laws have on the lives of the working class. So what is the Socialist alternative to the politics of the economic depression pursued by the various political parties across the capitalist political spectrum? Socialists have shown that capitalism can never be run in the interest of the whole of society no matter who is in power. The problems facing the working class can only be resolved by replacing capitalism with Socialism.

The metaphor of the State as a cricket umpire is wholly misleading just as it is to believe in a "*one Nation*" politics where class interests are united in the pursuit of a harmonious common purpose as the Labour leader Ed Miliband announced at the Labour Conference in September 2012. Capitalism, based on the private ownership of the means of production and distribution to the exclusion of the working class majority, will always be a social system of conflicting interests and class struggle. And the coercive State exists to protect and further the interests of the capitalist class. The actions of the State can never be neutral since they are always the actions of the capitalist state; "*the executive of the bourgeoisie*" (Marx). This statement applies to whoever is in power; whether it is the Tories, Labour, Liberal Democratic, Greens, UKIP, or Respect. And it applies equally to the fantasy politics of the various Trotskyist parties like Socialist Appeal.

Socialists understand that economic crises and trade depressions hurt the working class. But in understanding this important fact Socialists also recognise that the only solution to the pain, uncertainty and discomfort experienced by workers and their families during periods of economic crises and trade depressions as it does at any time during the trade cycle is for the working class to take conscious political action to replace capitalism with Socialism. The only practical politics of the economic crisis is to replace capitalism and the profit system with the common ownership and democratic control of the means of production and distribution by all of society.

INFLATION AND UNEMPLOYMENT

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, during what was known at the time as The Great Depression, and again the depression between the two world wars, an increasing number of workers – and even some professional economists – were paying attention to the analysis of capitalism made by Karl Marx in his work CAPITAL. Marx showed that unemployment, and its rise to peak levels in periodical phases of trade depression, arose out of the

structure of capitalism itself, and is therefore inevitable while capitalism lasts. This growing interest in Marx was all but extinguished with the publication in 1936 of J.M. Keynes' THE GENERAL THEORY OF EMPLOYMENT, INTEREST AND MONEY. According to the new doctrine it only needs that the government "manage the economy in such a way as to maintain demand" for full employment to be created and trade depressions to be demolished. Keynes described Marx's Capital as "*an obsolete economic textbook, which I know to be only scientifically erroneous but without interest or application for the modern world*" ("A SHORT HISTORY OF RUSSIA", J.M. Keynes, 1925) ...Alone in this country the Socialist Party of Great Britain insisted from the outset that Marx was right; that the new doctrines were fallacies; that full employment cannot be maintained; that trade depressions cannot be eliminated (QUESTIONS OF THE DAY, pp. 92-3 1976).

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Object and Declaration of Principles

Object

The establishment of a system of society based upon the common ownership and democratic control of the means and instruments for producing and distributing wealth by and in the interest of the whole community.

Declaration of Principles

THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF GREAT BRITAIN HOLDS:

1. That society as at present constituted is based upon the ownership of the means of living (ie land, factories, railways, etc.) by the capitalist or master class, and the consequent enslavement of the working class, by whose labour alone wealth is produced.
2. That in society, therefore, there is an antagonism of interests, manifesting itself as a class struggle, between those who possess but do not produce and those who produce but do not possess.
3. That this antagonism can be abolished only by the emancipation of the working class from the domination of the master class, by the conversion into common property of society of the means of production and distribution, and their democratic control by the whole people.
4. That as in the order of social evolution the working class is the last class to achieve its freedom, the emancipation of the working class will involve the emancipation of all mankind without distinction of race or sex.
5. That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself.
6. That as the machinery of government, including the armed forces of the nation, exists only to conserve the monopoly by the capitalist class of the wealth taken from the workers, the working class must organise consciously and politically for the conquest of the powers of government, national and local, in order that this machinery, including these forces, may be converted from an instrument of oppression into the agent of emancipation and the overthrow of privilege, aristocratic and plutocratic.
7. That as all political parties are but the expression of class interests, and as the interest of the working class is diametrically opposed to the interests of all sections of the master class, the party seeking working class emancipation must be hostile to every other party.
8. The Socialist Party of Great Britain, therefore, enters the field of political action determined to wage war against

all other political parties, whether alleged labour or avowedly capitalist, and calls upon the members of the working class of this country to muster under its banner to the end that a speedy termination may be wrought to the system which deprives them of the fruits of their labour, and that poverty may give place to comfort, privilege to equality, and slavery to freedom.

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